

Union Township Environmental Commission

Minutes of the January 13, 2009 Regular Meeting

The January 13, 2009 Regular Meeting of the Union Township Environmental Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM.

The notice of meeting as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Express Times satisfied the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act, and was also posted in the Municipal Building, on the Union Township website and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

I. Roll Call:

Present: Bill Harclerode, Michele McBride, Sandy Stiger, Kathleen Corcoran, John Wingler (not present for roll call), Chuck Neary (not present for roll call)

Absent: Steven Hurford

Public Members Present: Alan Ford, Frank Mazza, Neil Davis, Mike Romanek, Breann Liebermann, Brett Bragin, Bert Badenhausen, Al Ryland, Chris Altomari, Elliott Ruga

II. Reorganization

Mr. Harclerode stated that he has been reappointed as Chairman and suggested that Ms. McBride continued as Vice Chairman. Mr. Harclerode stated that, unless somebody else desires to serve as Secretary, Ms. Corcoran would continue. All agreed.

III. 2009 Meeting Dates

Ms. Corcoran made a motion to approve the Meeting dates. Ms. McBride seconded. All Approved.

IV. Minutes

Ms. McBride made a motion to approve the minutes. Mrs. Stiger seconded. All approved.

V. Chairmans Report and New Business

1. A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Neil Davis for his tireless efforts on the UTEC Newsletter. Mr. Davis does the layout, design, graphics and some articles and photos for the newsletter. He has worked on three UTEC newsletters as a volunteer.
2. Land Conservancy of NJ - Farmland Preservation mapping is excellent and is available on CD. Mr. Harclerode will keep it in the UTEC office for those interested.
3. 2009 ANJEC Road Shows were discussed. ANJEC is willing to come in and conduct presentations at UTEC meetings, including open space stewardship, opportunities and challenges in the Highlands, sustainable communities, stormwater management, and others issues.
4. Gannett Fleming was awarded a traffic impact engineering study associated with the Edna Mahon Rt. 173 Extension project.
5. Cozze junkyard removed about 1,000 tires, due to observations made as part of the Sidney Brook Study.

VI. Committee Reports:

Open Space Committee:

Mrs. Stiger would like to take some baseline pictures of one property a week just to see what everything looks like and date them. She proposes to review photos at least once a year, with a goal of twice a year. She proposed that another UTEC partner assist her with this effort. She proposed Chuck Neary as a potential UTEC candidate. Mr. Harclerode volunteered to help on the weekends, and he will ask Chuck Neary if he would be interested in helping during the week.

Community Well Testing:

John Wingler and Sandy Stiger reported that approximately 30 well water testers took advantage of the UTEC testing program.

Property Stewardship:

Michele McBride reported the following ongoing projects:

1. Hoffman Park RFP was submitted to Peter Jost on Dec. 22, 2008 for review. The Douglas Farm Deed Easement was also submitted to Mr. Jost, and she and Paige DiRoberto met with Mr. Jost to review the two documents. She spoke with him today and it is a very busy time of year with reorganization meetings, etc.; however she asked him to get back to her as soon as possible with feedback.
2. She spoke to John Trontis and Doug Kiofsky of the Hunterdon Parks and Recreation about the Hoffman RFP. A county property in Bethlehem Township was mentioned that may be able to utilize a similar RFP process, they are interested in following the Hoffman RFP process to see if it can be utilized on other County properties. A copy will be sent to them for review after attorney review.
2. Milligan Farm Trail Grant application was submitted on Dec. 15, 2008, which included a construction grant request of approximately \$21,150, with a matching in-kind service and/or materials amount of \$6,315. The Environmental Commission will be seeking to utilize township employees and equipment, and will ask for local community involvement for donation/installation of shrubbery and cleanup activities for the trails. She intends to put together a wish list to work from for the matching services and materials, and publicize it in the Spring Newsletter.

VII. Planning Board Report:

Mrs. Corcoran stated that the last PB meeting was a reorganization meeting. Mr. Kirkpatrick was reappointed as Chairman, Alan Ford was reappointed as Vice Chairman. All professionals were reappointed with the exception of the engineer, which the Township Committee is currently considering proposals as John Reymann has stepped down for 2009.

VIII. Transportation

Mr. Harclerode stated that Road Noise subcommittee has made progress in the past year. There are currently five bills in the NJ Senate and Assembly concerning engine braking. The next step is to find chairs on the committees where these bills reside. It is a nine step process and we are in step two or three. We are working closely with Assemblywoman Karrow on this, as she has been very helpful.

IX. Communication and Education

Ms. McBride stated that the UTEC Newsletter went out recently. She recently realized that using the tax assessor information has several down sides, such as renters will not receive the information, farmland assessed properties are listed separately than other properties, so some property owners would receive several copies of the newsletter. She also would like to give residents the option to opt-out of receiving a paper copy and provide it to residents the UTEC Newsletter on-line. A Spring Newsletter is currently proposed, depending on advertising funds received. The direct cost of the printing and mailing of the newsletter to residents is on the order of \$1,500.

X. Sidney Brook Study

Christine Altomori of Princeton Hydro reported on the Sidney Brook Study. She reported that through the summer, fall and into the winter, sampling was completed for macroinvertebrates, nutrients and coliforms. Stream gauges were installed to measure flow. Some have not been removed as they were frozen. A Characterization and Assessment Report will be prepared in approximately May 2009. She requested that the UTEC reach out to Kathy Hale to find out what the NJWSA plans are for the spring, and how Princeton Hydro's work will mesh with NJWSA's work.

XI. Highlands Coalition Presentation

Elliott Ruga of the Highlands Coalition made a presentation to the UTEC and audience. The Highlands coalition has been around since 1988 and currently Julia Somers is the Executive Director. Their mission is to ensure that the Highlands Region is protected and the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) is as protective as can be produced and enforced. Union Township is one of 88 municipalities within the Highlands Region. Union Twp. has 2,665 acres in planning

area and 10,482 in the preservation area. Highlands is a geophysical province which stretches from CT through NY and continuing into PA. NJ is in the forefront of this issue, as the other states have not implemented regulations. NY has bought up a lot of highlands property. Highlands provides drinking water for 5.4 million people in NJ. Preservation is land that is contiguous with core forests and more environmentally sensitive areas, and considered the more critical environmental resource of the highlands area. He noted that the Highlands Council has 15 seats, 14 members and is heavily weighted with elected officials. Gov. Corzine has not reappointed any members recently. Currently Union Township has passed a resolution for "Intent to Conform" to the Highlands, which provides the Township with relief for one year of compliance with Third Round COAH obligations. Mr. Ruga provided a general presentation regarding consideration of full conformance to the Highlands. Because the RMP document is so large (450+ pages), for those with limited time who are interested in learning about the RMP, he recommends reviewing the "Programs and Implementation" section of the RMP for a good summary of its important aspects. Conformance in the Highlands Planning Area can result in a lower COAH obligation. Towns that do not have sufficient capacity to support new growth can have their obligations adjusted only if they conform to the RMP. Highlands Council also can provide COAH planning grants. Conformance would provide legal protection through the Highlands Council from "Builders Remedy". With conformance, tax stabilization funding is also available through the Highlands Council. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs will provide potential funding for conforming municipalities; however, TDR's will be limited to occur only within the respective county boundaries. The Highlands Development Credit (HDC) bank has been established for affected property owners. A copy of the presentation is available on the Highlands Coalition website at: http://www.njhighlandscalition.org/PDF/PPT_Conformance_Union.pdf

XII. Hearing of Citizens:

Mike Romanek spoke about solar energy projects and benefits of using solar energy. He had a meeting with the Finance Committee of the School Board of Education, a representative from the NJ Clean Energy Council and a vendor, Solar Center. Solar Center gave a presentation re: solar panels at the elementary school. Solar Center provided a report on cost evaluation. The project would cost approximately \$4 million, but is anticipated to pay for itself within 11.5 years. Due to personal experience with his own personal solar system, he believes that 11.5 years is probably conservative and the project will pay for itself much sooner. Solar Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) were included in the economic analysis. Mike also stated that this vendor, Solar Center, may have group discount opportunities for homeowners, which maybe the UTEC can include information on in the next newsletter. The proposed 537 KWhr solar system at the school would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 4,395 tons which is equivalent to the absorption of 210 acres of trees. Mr. Romanek stated that Solar Center is also evaluating the Middle School, so there will be more information to come.

XII. Adjournment:

The Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hurford made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Corcoran, all approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Corcoran, Secretary